

### How Can Baby Get His Nutrients?

There are three ways that your baby can get the nutrients he needs. **Breast milk** is the healthiest food you can give your baby. It contains everything he needs with the exception of vitamin D, and iron. **Formula** comes fortified with all the essential nutrients in the right proportions for your baby. **Solid foods** fed in a balanced nutritious diet when he's ready, will keep your baby healthy, and help him to thrive.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusive breast-feeding for the first six months after birth and breastfeeding in combination with solid foods until at least age 2 or beyond.<sup>5</sup> The AAP suggests the use of infant formula for the first year of life for those infants who are not breastfed. Regardless of your baby's age, you never want to start your baby on solid foods before she is ready.

Around four to six months of age, your baby may show signs of being ready to eat some solid foods. About this time he loses the extrusion reflex, in which he instinctively pushes his tongue out when anything other than liquid is put in his mouth.

Formula is a complex science. Therefore, the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommends against using homemade baby formulas. They can be dangerously deficient in vitamins, and other important nutrients

### Is Your Baby Ready for Solid Foods?

- Has he doubled his birth weight?
- Can baby hold his head up?
- Does he sit up without support?
- Does she watch with interest as you eat or open her mouth as if to ask for a bite?

### Introducing Solids

When introducing solids, it is important to start slowly. Your baby's first solid food should be rice cereal because it is easy to digest and is unlikely to cause an allergic reaction. Mix the cereal according to the package directions. It should be only slightly thicker than milk. Let your baby explore the cereal with her hands first. When she is ready, offer her a spoonful. During the first few feedings, your baby will probably only eat a bite or two. Most of it will come right back out because of her immature swallowing coordination. As your baby gets used to cereal, you can start to introduce individual vegetables and fruits. When feeding, offer vegetables first, because babies have a natural "sweet tooth." If a food is rejected, wait and try again. Continual exposure will help your baby become a less particular eater. Rotating foods helps to avoid boredom. Encourage self-feeding and make mealtime a fun time for you and your baby.

### New Foods

It is recommended that new foods be introduced at home, rather than at a restaurant or child care setting, as a single ingredient, and for a several day trial to see if it is well tolerated. Food can be introduced this way every 3 to 5 days as appropriate for the infant's developmental readiness. This slow, one at a time, process gives parents or caregivers a chance to identify and eliminate any food that causes an allergic reaction.

Egg, dairy, peanut, tree nuts, fish and shellfish can be gradually introduced during the same four to six month window after less allergenic foods have been tolerated. In fact, delaying the introduction of these foods may increase your baby's risk of developing allergies.

## Foods to Avoid

For the first year, it is important to avoid feeding certain foods.

### These foods include:

- Cow's milk - Cow's milk also doesn't have all the nutrients a baby needs during his or her first year, which is why breastmilk or formula are the best milk sources.
- Fruit juice - Fruit juice contains calories but none of the fat, protein, calcium, zinc, vitamin D or fiber that babies need. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that fruit juice not be given at all to babies younger than a year old.
- Honey - It is important to avoid honey, because it may contain bacteria that cause botulism, which can be deadly. The amounts of these bacteria in honey are very, very small and it doesn't affect older children and adults. But, it can be enough to make newborns and small babies very sick or even cause death

You may have heard that you should avoid feeding babies allergenic foods — including peanuts, eggs, wheat, citrus fruits, tomatoes and strawberries — during the first year. But the AAP now recommends introducing allergenic foods early, between 4 and 11 months, to prevent food allergies.

### The following foods are choking hazards and should be avoided:

- Popcorn kernels
- Hard candy
- Raw apples
- Unripe pears
- Hot dogs, whole or chunks
- Undercooked or raw carrots
- Unpeeled grapes
- Stringy foods

#### Resources include:

1. Chan, Edmond S, et al. "Early Introduction of Foods to Prevent Food Allergy." *Allergy, Asthma, and Clinical Immunology : Official Journal of the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, BioMed Central, 12 Sept. 2018, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6157280/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6157280/). Accessed 12/8/2021
2. Greer FR;Sicherer SH;Burks AW; ; "The Effects of Early Nutritional Interventions on the Development of Atopic Disease in Infants and Children: The Role of Maternal Dietary Restriction, Breastfeeding, Hydrolyzed Formulas, and Timing of Introduction of Allergenic Complementary Foods." *Pediatrics*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Apr. 2019, [pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30886111/](http://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30886111/). Accessed 12/8/2021
3. "Healthy Active Living for Families- Infant Food and Feeding." Home, American Academy of Pediatrics, 6 July 2021, [www.aap.org/en/patient-care/healthy-active-living-for-families/](http://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/healthy-active-living-for-families/). Accessed 12/8/2021
4. "Starting Solid Foods." *HealthyChildren.org*, American Academy of Pediatrics, 17 Mar. 2021, [www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Starting-Solid-Foods.aspx](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Starting-Solid-Foods.aspx). Accessed 12/8/2021
5. Meek, Joan Younger, and Lawrence Noble. "Policy Statement: Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk." *American Academy of Pediatrics*, 27 June 2022, [publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/150/1/e2022057988/188347/Policy-Statement-Breastfeeding-and-the-Use-of-human-milk](https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/150/1/e2022057988/188347/Policy-Statement-Breastfeeding-and-the-Use-of-human-milk). Accessed June 29, 2023